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# THE DUBLIN LITERARY GAZETTE,

OR

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## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

*The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*  
11 vols. 18mo. New Edition.—Edinburgh,  
Cadell, and Co.

[UNPUBLISHED.]

SIR WALTER has been for some time engaged on a new edition of his poetical works, similar in its plan to that which has been adopted with so much success in the case of the *Waverley Novels*. To every poem is prefixed an introduction, detailing the events on which the story is founded, all the circumstances under which it came to be composed, and the author's guesses at the cause of its popularity or the contrary. This edition will contain, in addition to the works comprised in the former ones, the *Doom of Devorgoil*, which we had occasion very recently to cut up so severely, *Auchin-drane*, reviewed at the same time, and '*Macduff's Cross*,' which appeared before only in a *Miscellany* published by Joanna Baillie, in 1823.

The work is not yet published, and we are indebted to the kindness of a brother critic, the Editor of the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, for the opportunity of laying before our readers the first part of the new introduction to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which will doubtless prove to them, as it has done to us, deeply interesting, because it contains a sort of epitome of Sir Walter's literary biography, at that critical period when he formed his plans for life; we know not that we could present our readers with a richer treat, and we shall therefore not detain them by any further preface:

"A poem of nearly thirty years' standing may be supposed hardly to need an Introduction, since, without one, it has been able to keep itself afloat through the best part of a generation. Nevertheless, as in the edition of the *Waverley Novels* now in course of publication, I have imposed on myself the task of saying something concerning the purpose and history of each, in their turn, I am desirous that the Poems for which I first received some marks of the public favour, should also be accompanied with such scraps of their literary history as may be supposed to carry interest along with them. Even if I should be mistaken in thinking that the secret history of what was once so popular may still attract public attention and curiosity, it seems to me not without its use to record the manner and circumstances under which the present, and other Poems on the same plan, attained, for a season, an extensive reputation.

"I must resume the story of my literary labours at the period at which I broke off in the *Essay on the Imitation of Popular Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 82, when I had enjoyed the first gleam of public favour, by the success of the first edition of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The second edition, published in 1803, proved, in the language of the trade; rather a

heavy concern. The demand in Scotland had been supplied by the first edition, and the curiosity of the English was not much awakened by poems in the rude garb of antiquity, accompanied with notes referring to the obscure feuds of barbarous clans, of whose very names civilized history was ignorant.

"At this time I stood personally in a different position from that which I occupied when I first dipped my desperate pen in ink for other purposes than those of my profession. In 1796, when I first published the translations from Bürger, I was an isolated individual, with only my own wants to provide for, and having, in a great measure, my own inclinations alone to consult. In 1803, when the second edition of the *Minstrelsy* appeared, I had arrived at a period of life, when men, however thoughtless, encounter duties and circumstances which press consideration and plans of life upon the most careless minds. I had been for some time married—was the father of a rising family, and, though fully-enabled to meet the consequent demands upon me, it was my duty and desire to place myself in a situation which would enable me to make honorable provision against the various contingencies of life.

"It may be readily supposed that the attempts which I had made in literature had been unfavourable to my success at the bar. The goddess Themis is, at Edinburgh, and, I suppose, everywhere else, of a peculiarly jealous disposition. She will not readily consent to share her authority, and sternly demands from her votaries not only that real duty be carefully attended to and discharged, but that a certain air of business shall be observed, even in the midst of total idleness. It is prudent, if not absolutely necessary, in a young barrister, to appear completely engrossed by his profession; however destitute of employment he may be, he ought to preserve, if possible, the appearance of full occupation. He should at least seem perpetually engaged among his law-papers—dusting them, as it were; and, as Ovid advises the fair,

*Si nullus erit pulvis tamen exute nullum.*

Perhaps such extremity of attention is more especially required, considering the great number of counsellors who are called to the bar, and how very small a proportion of them are finally disposed, or find encouragement, to follow the law as a profession. Hence the number of deserters is so great, that the least lingering look behind occasions a young novice to be set down as one of the intending fugitives. Certain it is, that the Scottish Themis was, at this time, peculiarly jealous of any flirtation with the Muses, on the part of those who had ranged themselves under her banners. This was probably owing to her consciousness of the superior attractions of her rivals. Of late, however, she has relaxed; in some instances, in this particular; an eminent example of which has been shown in the case of my friend Mr. Jeffrey,

who, after long conducting one of the most influential literary periodicals of the age, with unquestionable ability, has been, by the general consent of his brethren, recently elected to be their Dean of Faculty, or President—being the highest acknowledgment of his professional talents which they had it in their power to offer. But this is an incident much beyond the ideas of a period of thirty years' distance, when a barrister, who really possessed any turn for lighter literature, was at as much pains to conceal it, as if it had, in reality, been something to be ashamed of; and I could mention more than one instance in which literature and society have suffered loss that jurisprudence might be enriched.

"Such, however, was not my case; for the reader will not wonder that my open interference with matters of light literature diminished my employment in the weightier matters of the law. Nor did the solicitors, upon whose choice the counsel takes rank in his profession, do me less than justice by regarding others among my contemporaries as fitter to discharge the duty due to their clients, than a young man who was taken up with running after ballads, whether Teutonic or national. My profession and I, therefore, came to stand nearly upon the footing on which honest Slender consoled himself with having established with Mistress Anne Page. 'There was no great love between us at the beginning, and it pleased heaven to decrease it on farther acquaintance!' I became sensible that the time was come when I must either buckle myself resolutely to 'the toil by day, the lamp by night,' renouncing all the Deliahs of my imagination, or bid adieu to the profession of the law and hold another course.

"I confess my own inclination revolted from the more severe choice, which might have been deemed by many the wiser alternative. As my transgressions had been numerous, my repentance must have been signalled by unusual sacrifices. I ought to have mentioned that, since my fourteenth or fifteenth year, my health, originally delicate, had been extremely robust. From infancy, I had laboured under the infirmity of a severe lameness, but, as I believe is usually the case with men of spirit who suffer under personal inconveniences of this nature, I had, since the improvement of my health, in defiance of this incapacitating circumstance, distinguished myself by the endurance of toil on foot or horseback, having often walked thirty miles a-day, and rode upwards of a hundred, without stopping. In this manner I made many pleasant journeys through parts of the country then not very accessible, gaining more amusement and instruction than I have been able to acquire since I have travelled in a more commodious manner. I practised most silvan sports also with some success, and with great delight. But these pleasures must have been all resigned, or used with great moderation, had I determined to regain my station at the bar. It was

even doubtful whether I could, with perfect character as a juriconsult, retain a situation in a volunteer corps of cavalry which I then held. The threats of invasion were at this time instant and menacing; the call by Britain on her children was universal, and was answered by many who, like myself, consulted rather their will, than their ability to bear arms. My services, however, were found useful in assisting to maintain the discipline of the corps, being the point on which their constitution rendered them most amenable to military criticism. In other respects, the squadron was a fine one, consisting of handsome men, well mounted and armed, at their own expense. My attention to the corps took up a good deal of time; and while it occupied many of the happiest hours of my life, it furnished an additional reason for my reluctance again to encounter the severe course of study indispensable to success in the juridical profession.

"On the other hand, my father, whose feelings might have been hurt by my quitting the bar, had been for two or three years dead, so that I had no control to thwart my own inclination; and my income being equal to all the comforts, and some of the elegancies, of life, I was not pressed to an irksome employment by necessity, that most powerful of motives; consequently, I was the more easily seduced to choose the employment which was most agreeable. This was yet the easier, that in 1800, I had obtained the preferment of Sheriff of Selkirkshire, about £900 a-year in value, and which was the more agreeable to me, as in that county I had several friends and relations. But I did not abandon the profession to which I had been educated, without certain prudential resolutions, which, at the risk of egotism, I will here mention; not without the hope that they may be useful to young persons who may stand in circumstances similar to those in which I then stood.

"In the first place, upon considering the lives and fortunes of persons who had given themselves up to literature, or to the task of pleasing the public, it seemed to me that the circumstances which chiefly affected their happiness and character, were those from which Horace has bestowed upon authors the epithet of the Irritable Race. It requires no depth of philosophic reflection to perceive that the petty warfare of Pope with the Dunces of this period, could not have been carried on without his suffering the most acute torture, such as a man must endure from mosquitoes, by whose stings he suffers agony, although he can crush them in his grasp by myriads. Nor is it necessary to call to memory the many humiliating instances in which men of the greatest genius have, to avenge some pitiful quarrel, made themselves ridiculous during their lives, to become the still more degraded objects of pity to future times.

"Upon the whole, as I had no pretension to the genius of the distinguished persons who had fallen into such errors, I concluded there could be no occasion for imitating them in these mistakes, or what I considered as such; and in adopting literary pursuits as the principal occupation of my future life, I resolved, if possible, to avoid those weaknesses of temper, which seemed to have most easily beset my more celebrated predecessors.

"With this view, it was my first resolution to keep as far as was in my power abreast of society, continuing to maintain my place in general company, without yielding to the very

natural temptation of narrowing myself to what is called literary society. By doing so, I imagined I should escape the besetting sin of listening to language, which, from one motive or other, ascribes a very undue degree of consequence to literary pursuits, as if they were indeed the business rather than the amusement of life. The opposite course can only be compared to the injudicious conduct of one who pampers himself with cordial and luscious draughts, until he is unable to endure whole-some bitters. Like Gil Blas, therefore, I resolved to stick by the society of my *commis*, instead of seeking that of a more literary cast, and to maintain my general interest in what was going on around me, reserving the man of letters for the desk and the library.

"My second resolution was a corollary from my first. I determined that, without shutting my ears to the voice of true criticism, I would pay no regard to that which assumes the form of satire. I therefore resolved to arm myself with the triple brass of Horace, against all the roving warfare of satire, parody, and sarcasm; to laugh if the jest was a good one, or, if otherwise, to let it hum and buzz itself to sleep.

"It is to the observance of these rules (according to my best belief) that, after a life of thirty years engaged in literary labours of various kinds, I attribute my never having been entangled in any literary quarrel or controversy; and, which is a more pleasing result, that I have been distinguished by the personal friendship of my most approved contemporaries of all parties.

"I adopted, at the same time, another resolution, on which it may doubtless be remarked that it was well for me that I had it in my power to do so, and that, therefore, it is a line of conduct which can be less generally applicable in other cases. Yet I fail not to record this part of my plan, convinced that though it may not be in every one's power to adopt exactly the same resolution, he may, nevertheless, by his own exertions, in some shape or other attain the object on which it was founded—namely, to secure the means of subsistence, without relying exclusively on literary talents. In this respect, I determined that literature should be my staff, but not my crutch, and that the profits of my labour, however convenient otherwise, should not become necessary to my ordinary expenses. With this purpose, I resolved, if the interest of my friends could so far favour me, to retire upon any of the respectable officers of the law, in which persons of that profession are glad to take refuge, when they feel themselves, or are judged by others, incompetent to aspire to its higher offices and honors. Upon such an office an author might hope to retreat, without any perceptible alteration of circumstances, whenever the time should arrive that the public grew weary of his endeavours to please, or he himself should tire of the occupation of authorship. At this period of my life, I possessed so many friends capable of assisting me in this object of ambition, that I could hardly overrate my own prospects of obtaining the moderate preferment to which I limited my wishes; and in fact, I obtained, in no long period, the reversion of a situation which completely met them."

Here we must close our extracts for the present, but as we have been favoured with the whole of the introductions both to this poem, and to the *Lady of the Lake*, we shall, if possible, resume next week.

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

*Paul Clifford.* By the Author of *Pelham*, &c. 3 vols. post 8vo.—London, Colburn and Bentley.

WE never much admired the numerous novels of this author, and the present is, we think, by far the worst of the set. There is quite too much of pretence about them to please us; and there is a total absence of *bonhomie*, kindly feeling, and goodness, we mean moral goodness, from all the characters, which is very unnatural and offensive. Cleverness they have, no doubt, and a considerable share of it, force and variety, and occasionally greater depth of observation than one is accustomed to meet in the rest of the circulating library novels; but there is withal, in general, a cold heartless sneering selfishness in them, a pedantic dogmatism about all manner of persons and things, that excites a mingled feeling of indignation and dislike. In the present novel the writer is professedly satirical; but there is no strong, healthy-toned morality in his satire. It rather reminds one of the impotent attempt to ridicule Johnson, made by the author of *Lexiphanes*. In order to expose the subjects of his animadversion to contempt, he introduces them in situations utterly unnatural, and makes them speak a language wholly foreign to their characters and habits, ekeing out his attempted portraits by the clumsy artifice of all villainous painters, namely, writing the name under each, that is, such a nick-name as he thinks cannot fail to be understood. But we shall illustrate our meaning, by presenting our readers with a scene, in which the principal actors are supposed to be the king of England, the duke of Wellington, the Attorney-General, the president of the Board of Control, and Lord Eldon, under the guise of common ruffians: it is only necessary to premise, that the hero, Paul Clifford, is a sort of founding, brought up among highway-men and pickpockets, and educated by a Scotch school-master, called Peter McGrawler, brushed up by Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, an "accident reporter," by whom he is introduced into this society, which is called "the robbers' club."

Hear how this vulgar dandy rails on the Lord's anointed:—

"Have you never heard of Gentleman George? 'What! the noted head of a flash public-house in the country? To be sure I have, often; my poor nurse, Dame Lobkins, used to say he was the best spoken man in the trade!' 'Ay, so he is still. In his youth, George was a very handsome fellow, but a little too fond of his lass and his bottle to please his father, a very staid old gentleman, who walked about on Sundays with a bob-wig and a gold-headed cane, and was a much better farmer on week days than he was head of a public-house. George used to be a remarkably smart-dressed fellow, and so he is to this day. He has a great deal of wit, is a very good whist-player, has a capital cellar, and is so fond of seeing his friends drunk, that he bought some time ago a large pewter measure in which six men can stand upright. The girls, or rather the old women, to whom he used to be much more civil of the two, always liked him; they say, nothing is so fine as his fine speeches, and they give him the title of '*Gentleman George*.' He is a nice kind hearted man in many things. Pray Heaven we shall have no